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Agenda item 63

Role of science and technology in the context of security, disarmament and other related fields

Report of the First Committee

Rapporteur: Mr. Motaz M. **Zahran** (Egypt)

I. Introduction

1. The item entitled "Role of science and technology in the context of security, disarmament and other related fields" was included in the provisional agenda of the fifty-third session of the General Assembly in accordance with Assembly resolution 51/40 of 10 December 1996.

2. At its 3rd plenary meeting, on 15 September 1998, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the First Committee.

3. At its 2nd meeting, on 17 September 1998, the First Committee decided to hold a general debate on all disarmament and international security items allocated to it, namely, items 63 to 79, which was held at the 3rd to 12th meetings, from 12 to 16 and from 19 to 21 October (see A/C.1/53/PV.3–12). Thematic discussions on the items were held, and draft resolutions were introduced and considered, at the 14th to 21st meetings, on 23 and from 27 to 30 October and on 2 November (see A/C.1/53/PV.14–21). Action on all draft resolutions was taken at the 22nd to 31st meetings, from 3 to 6 and on 9, 10, 12 and 13 November (see A/C.1/53/PV.22–31).

4. There were no documents before the Committee under this item.

98-35999 (E) 201198

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.1/53/L.17 and Rev.1

5. At the 17th meeting, on 28 October, the representative of the Russian Federation introduced a draft resolution entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (A/C.1/53/L.17), which read:

"*The General Assembly*,

"*Recalling* its resolutions on the role of science and technology in the context of international security in which, *inter alia*, it recognized that scientific and technological developments could have both civilian and military applications and that progress in science and technology for civilian applications needed to be maintained and encouraged,

"*Noting* that considerable progress has been achieved in developing and applying the latest information technologies and means of telecommunication,

"*Affirming* that it sees in this process the broadest positive opportunities for the further development of civilization, the expansion of opportunities for cooperation for the common good of all States, the enhancement of mankind's creative potential and the formation of a global information area for the international community,

"*Recalling* in this connection the approaches and principles for creating such a community, which were outlined at the international Conference on the Information Society and Development, held in Midrand, South Africa, in 1996,

"*Taking note* of the results of the Ministerial Conference on Terrorism held in Paris in July 1996, and of the recommendations it made,

"*Noting* that the dissemination and use of information technologies and means affect the interests of the entire international community and their optimum inventory is possible only in the context of broad international cooperation,

"*Expressing concern* that these technologies and means may potentially be used for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of ensuring international security and stability,

"*Considering it necessary* to prevent the emergence of information technologies and means whose applications can adversely affect the security of States,

"*Also considering it necessary* to prevent the misuse or exploitation of information resources or technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes,

"1. *Calls upon* the States Members of the United Nations to promote at multilateral levels the consideration of existing and potential threats in the field of information security;

"2. *Invites* all Member States to inform the Secretary-General of their views and assessments concerning the following questions:

"(a) General appreciation of the issues of information security;

"(b) Definition of basic notions related to information security, including unauthorized interference with or misuse of information and telecommunications systems and information resources;

"(c) Advisability of developing international legal regimes to provide security of global information and telecommunications systems and to combat terrorism and criminality in the field of information;

"3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

"4. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session an item entitled 'Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security'."

6. At its 24th meeting, on 5 November, the Committee had before it a revised draft resolution entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security" (A/C.1/53/L.17/Rev.1), also submitted by the *Russian Federation*, which it adopted without a vote (see para. 7).

III. Recommendation of the First Committee

7. The First Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolutions on the role of science and technology in the context of international security, in which, *inter alia,* it recognized that scientific and technological developments could have both civilian and military applications and that progress in science and technology for civilian applications needed to be maintained and encouraged,

Noting that considerable progress has been achieved in developing and applying the latest information technologies and means of telecommunication,

Affirming that it sees in this process the broadest positive opportunities for the further development of civilization, the expansion of opportunities for cooperation for the common good of all States, the enhancement of mankind's creative potential, and additional improvements in the circulation of information in the global community,

Recalling in this connection the approaches and principles outlined at the Information Society and Development Conference, held at Midrand, South Africa, from 13 to 15 May 1996,

Taking note of the results of the Ministerial Conference on Terrorism, held in Paris on 30 July 1996, and of the recommendations it made,[1]

Noting that the dissemination and use of information technologies and means affect the interests of the entire international community and that optimum effectiveness is enhanced by broad international cooperation,

Expressing concern that these technologies and means can potentially be used for purposes that are inconsistent with the objectives of maintaining international stability and security and may adversely affect the security of States,

Considering that it is necessary to prevent the misuse or exploitation of information resources or technologies for criminal or terrorist purposes,

1. *Calls upon* Member States to promote at multilateral levels the consideration of existing and potential threats in the field of information security;

[1] See A/51/261, annex.

2. *Invites* all Member States to inform the Secretary-General of their views and assessments on the following questions:

(a) General appreciation of the issues of information security;

(b) Definition of basic notions related to information security, including unauthorized interference with or misuse of information and telecommunications systems and information resources;

(c) Advisability of developing international principles that would enhance the security of global information and telecommunications systems and help to combat information terrorism and criminality;

3. *Requests* the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session;

4. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session an item entitled "Developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security".